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- *Between You and Me - An Indian Legend.*
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- *Kartavirya - An Absorbing Character from Indian Classics.*
- *No Monkey Business - in Towards Better English.*
- *Viswamitra's Yajna in the Story of Rama*
- *The Flower that Isn't in the Nature's Kingdom.*
- *Newsflash, Did You Know, Let Us Know and More.*

Thoughts to be Treasured

No labour is too mean for one who wants to earn an honest penny.

—Mahatma Gandhi

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CHANDAMAMA

Controlling Editor: NAGI REDDI

Founder: CHAKRAPANI

HOW TO WELCOME THE NEW YEAR

In the month of November 1985 the two supreme leaders of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. met in Geneva and discussed how not to push the earth farther to the brink of destruction. This meeting was perhaps the departing year's greatest gift to humanity!

Leaders of countries which are making and storing nuclear bombs often forget that this is no longer a business between them—the mutual enemies. The explosion of their bombs imperil the whole earth, all the countries which have nothing to do with their rivalry.

Never before had a situation arisen when the fate of so many (in fact of the whole humanity) depended on so few.

We can welcome the New Year only with prayers that God give good sense to these leaders. This is of utmost importance.



धराचः कामाननुयन्ति बालास्ते मृत्योर्यन्ति विततस्य पाशम् ।

अथ धीरा अमृतत्वं विदित्वा ध्रुवमध्रुवेष्विह न प्रार्थयन्ते ॥

Parācaḥ kāmānanuyanti bālāste mṛtyoryanti vitatasya pāśam

Atha dhīrā amṛtatṭvam viditvā dhruvamadhruveṣviha na prārthayante

The ignorant runs after false pleasures and falls into the wide net of death. The wise knows what is eternal; he does not expect anything of lasting value from the inconstant pleasures of life.

— The Kathopanishad



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NEWS FLASH



Trip to Mars

Twenty years ago Wernher Von Braun who pioneered rockets for Hitler's Germany and then for the United States, predicted that by 1984 man would have landed on Mars. Fulfilment of his prediction is not in sight but NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration) of the U.S.A. is already planning to send an unmanned space-ship to Mars in 1990.

NASA puts the cost of a manned flight to Mars at fifty billion dollars.

Acupuncture in Ancient India

At the national conference of acupuncture held in Beijing recently, Dr. P.K. Singh, Director of the Indian Acupuncture Centre, Allahabad, said that the art of curing by sticking little needles in the body originated in India and not in China. Among many instances of this formula of treatment he presented one that was of the great hero Bhishma who was kept alive for 58 days by sticking needles at two acupuncture points in the back so that he could die on a particular auspicious day.



On a Toothpaste Diet

Judy Schwartz, a 27-year-old American woman, whose boat accidentally drifted off Indonesia coast, spent 21 days in the sea, eating a tubeful of toothpaste in small quantities.

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DID YOU KNOW?



The kingdom of Monaco is constituted of 390 acres of land.

The only female film star to appear on a postage stamp is Grace Kelly. Of course, she was not featured on the stamp as a film star, but as the wife of Prince Rainier III of Monaco, along with her husband, in 1956.



The first talking film (talkie) was directed by Alfred Hitchcock. It was made in England in 1931 and named *Blackmail*.

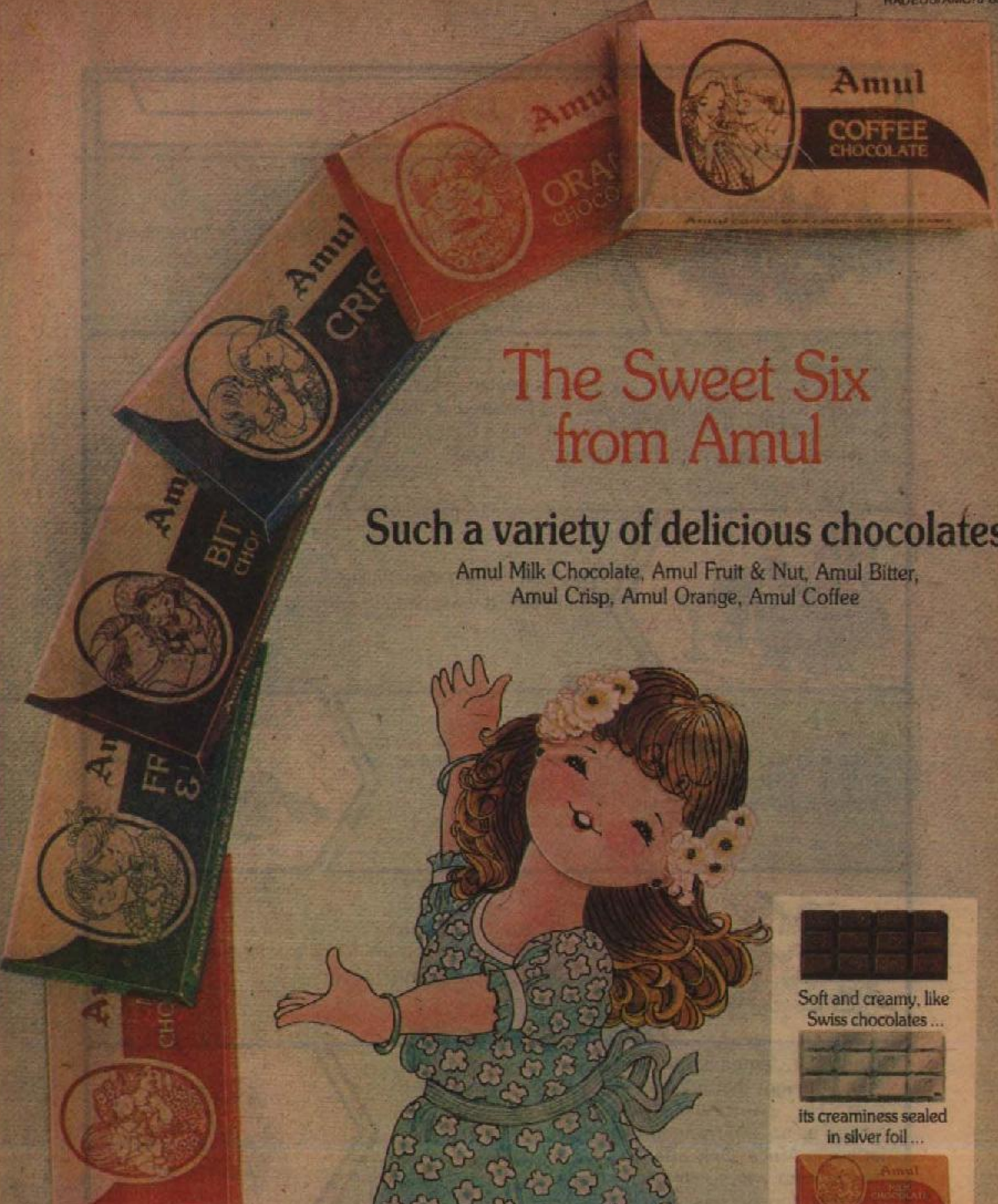
In the England of 16th century the spoon was a statue symbol. Aristocrats carried their own spoons to banquets hosted by others.



In the fourteenth century the Black Plague destroyed half the population of Europe.

When "Dr. James Barry" died in 1865 at the age of 72, many thought that England lost a distinguished physician. "He" indeed was a distinguished physician who served as an army surgeon and did splendid works for lepers in Africa. Only after the doctor's death, another doctor who was to issue the death-certificate, found out that the deceased was a lady!





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RAMA

—By Manoj Das

(King Dasaratha ruled Koshala from the beautiful city of Ayodhya. He had three queens. Wishing to have worthy sons, he performed a Yajna. A luminous being appeared from the flames and offered him cream.)

THE FIRST ADVENTURE

King Dasaratha fed his three queens with the cream given to him by the godly being who had appeared amidst the flames. At the end of a year Kaushalya the eldest queen, and Kaikeyee the second queen, gave birth to a son each while from Sumitra, the youngest queen, were born two sons. They were named Rama, Bharata,

Lakshmana and Shatrughna, respectively.

Ayodhya went festive. As it is, the people lived a happy life. Now they danced and sang with unbound joy. The king's happiness was their happiness.

Days passed. The four princes grew up into boyhood, revealing their excellent qualities, like four lotus





buds opening their charming petals.

And, like lotuses which charm and delight whoever looks at them, the princes inspired delight in the hearts of those who saw them or talked to them.

The eldest of them, Rama, of course became the centre of everybody's attention. By the time he was fifteen, he became the object of marvel for kings and commoners alike. All loved and adored him. What intrigued his parents was the fact that even sages and seers showed respect to him.

Only a few great souls like the sages Vasishtha and Visvamitra found nothing surprising in it. They knew that Rama was the incarnation of Vishnu. Anyone having devotion for the Lord could not but feel attracted towards Rama, even if he did not know Rama's true identity.

Of Rama's three brothers — all younger to him by hours — the one to behave like his shadow was Lakshmana. Rama, without any doubt, was dearer to him than his own life. There was nothing which he would not gladly sacrifice for Rama's sake.

Bharata and Shatrughna, who moved like twins, formed the 'other pair. Of course, for them too, Rama was the object of adoration.

One morning, while King Dasaratha held court, the chief of the guards at the castle gate rushed in to inform him of the arrival of an august visitor. He was Sage Visvamitra. The king stepped forward to receive the sage.

Visvamitra was once a king. Even then he lived the life of a sage and was called *Rajarishi* — "a Rishi though a

king". Later he forsook his throne and entered the forest and devoted years to askesis and became known as *Maharishi* – "the great Rishi". He was widely respected and feared too.

With suitable words and gestures King Dasaratha welcomed Visvamitra. In his great enthusiasm, the king promised to give away anything the valued guest would demand.

No doubt, the king meant what he said. He would have made a gift of his kingdom, that too quite gladly, had the sage wanted it. But Visvamitra's demand was totally unex-

pected. In it the king felt a bolt from the blue.

This is what Visvamitra said:

"O King, for a long time I have been trying to perform a special Yajna in the peace of the forest. But two demons named Maricha and Subahu seem determined to forestall my efforts. If I let myself grow angry and curse them, they can be dispelled or destroyed. But such is the discipline I have to follow that I cannot let myself be overpowered by wrath."

The sage had his own senses under his complete control, so much so that he





even did not nurture any hatred for the demons. At the same time such wicked creatures whose only joy rested in disturbing man's spiritual pursuit, ought to be destroyed.

Visvamitra was sure that none but Rama could put an end to the mischief of Maricha and Subahu. Hence the prince must accompany him into the forest.

King Dasaratha sat stunned at the Rishi's proposal. From what he heard about the demons, he was certain that they were immensely powerful and crafty. How can

his young son be a match for them? At the same time, he had already promised to fulfil the Rishi's demand. What is he to do now? He saw dark and for a moment fell into a swoon.

"O great Rishi" he said on recovering, "Allow me to proceed, along with my army, to protect your Yajna. I am prepared to lay down my life in carrying out the mission. How can you expect a mere boy to vanquish such fearful beings endowed with supernatural powers? True, my sons have learnt the art of fighting from able teachers and generals. But they have never fought in any battle. How can you depend on any of them? I am sorry, O my valued guest, I cannot push Rama into the jaws of death"

"You propose to go back on your word, do you?" asked an annoyed Visvamitra.

But Vasishta stepped in. "It is for the benefit of Rama, O King, that the noble Visvamitra desires to lead him into an encounter with the demons. Be sure, no power can harm Rama as long as he is under Visvamitra's care and

protection."

Vasishta's counsel prevailed. The king called Rama and directed him to follow the sage.

As was expected, Lakshmana accompanied Rama in this first ever adventure in his life.

When the three crossed the river Sarayu, Visvamitra taught Rama a hymn that would immunise him to fever and exhaustion and would protect him from any attack by demons while he was asleep or unmindful. The grateful Rama bowed down to his guide.

On their way the wise

guide told the two princes many a story of rivers, confluences and forests. They spent their nights in Ashrams where they were received with great warmth of affection.

Soon they entered a land that wore a haunted look. Houses stood in their ruins; fields lay waste, though it was evident that once they were tilled.

At Rama's query Visvamitra told him that once prosperous at Indra's blessings, the land had been reduced to wilderness by a demoness named Tadaka. She was proud of her strength and



magic powers and she loved to try them on innocent people.

"Well, Rama, should you not kill the demoness and bring life to this land?" the sage suggested.

Rama was hesitant, for it was normally against the principles of a prince to kill a female. Visvamitra understood his mind and told him that no feminine virtue, no kindness, no tenderness was known to Tadaka. She was brutality incarnate and hence deserved no mercy.

Rama produced a sound with the string of his arrow. Suddenly an eerie laughter and clouds of dust appeared to be closing in on them. They knew that Tadaka, surprised

by the sound, was already in action.

Instantly the clouds of dust brought down a shower of stones. Evening was not far. Visvamitra cautioned Rama saying that demons grew more powerful in the darkness.

Rama was still thinking of merely driving the demoness away from the region by inflicting wounds on her and terrifying her. But the ferocious demoness, in a sudden move, emerged from the dusky forest. Tall as a palm tree, she held a huge rock with which she was ready to crush her adversaries.

There was no time to lose. Rama struck her with an arrow. She gave out an earth-shaking cry and fell down-dead.

—To Continue



A Folktale from Thailand

WHEN THE CROCODILE COULD ROAR

There was a time when animals were different from what they are today. Take for example the case of the crocodile. And when we remember the crocodile, we cannot but remember the rabbit.

You may ask, what was common between the crocodile and the rabbit? Nothing much, except that both had long tails.

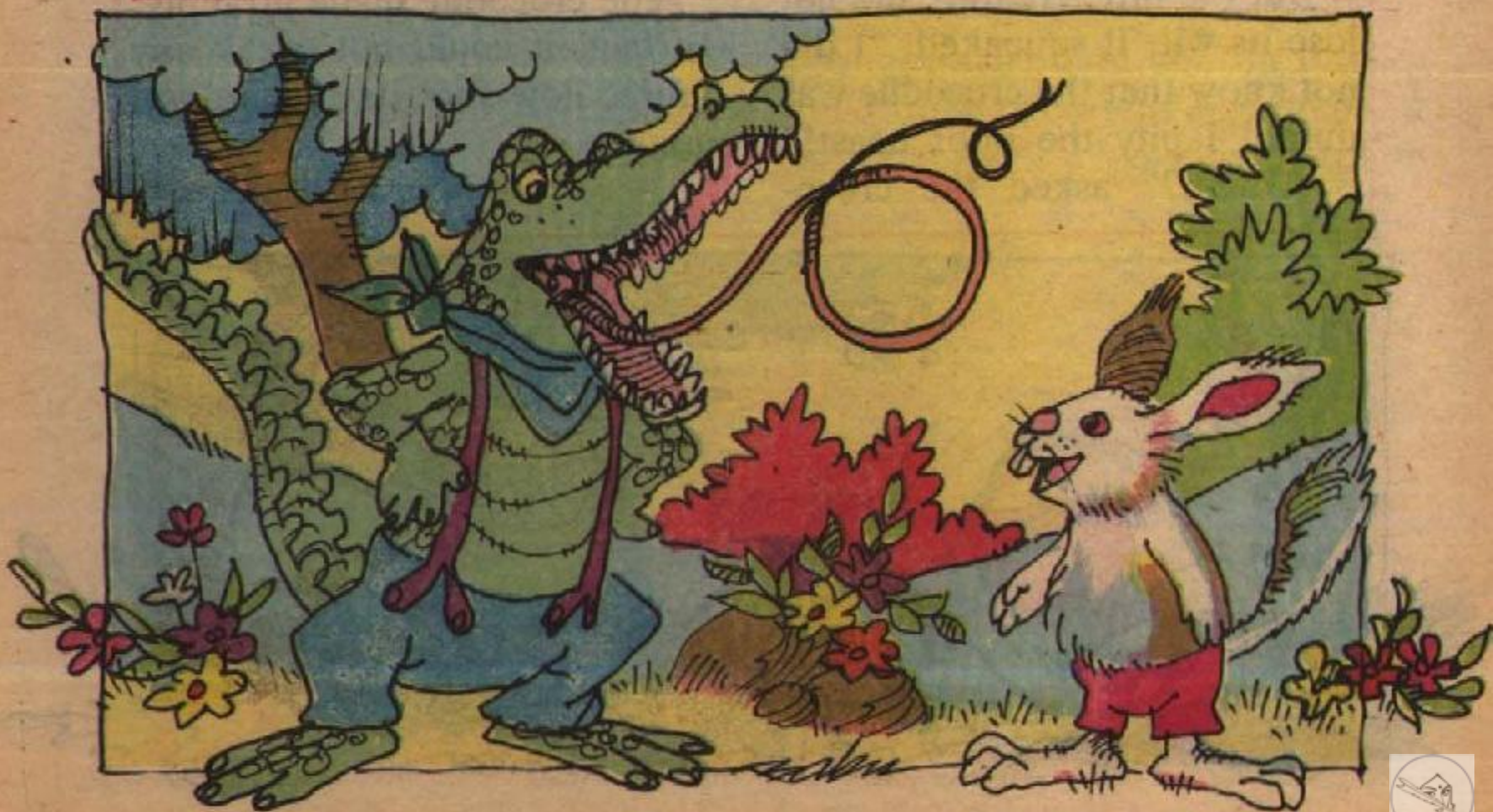
Tails? Yes. The crocodile retains its tail to this day although you cannot exactly mark the

point where its body ends and the tail begins. Not that the rabbit does not have a tail, but it is rather the rump of a tail than a real tail.

What is more important than the tail is, the crocodile could roar. It had a tongue as long as a whip. Well, how it lost it is closely linked with how the rabbit lost the greater part of its tail.

It happened like this:

One day the rabbit was nibbling at tender grass on the



river-bank. The crocodile, who did not lack in food, wanted to have a taste of the rabbit for a change. There were many small rocks rising their heads over the water all along the bank. The crocodile went closer to them and hardly looked different from the rocks. It kept its mouth wide open. Its lower jaw remained hidden under the water, the upper jaw looked like an innocent slab of stone projected over the water.

After a while the rabbit felt thirsty. It walked straight into the crocodile's jaws!

The crocodile closed its mouth. The rabbit suddenly found itself in a dark cell.

But the little creature did not lose its wit. It squeaked, "I did not know that the crocodile was dumb! I pity the poor beast!"

"Dumb?" asked the croco-

dile, ready to give out a terrific roar. It had just opened its mouth when the rabbit jumped out. But it jumped out while the crocodile's tongue was entangled in its toe-nails.

The crocodile snapped its jaws at great haste, in order to stop the rabbit from escaping. It was too late. Its sharp teeth cut its own tongue - along with the rabbit's tail.

The rabbit ran away. It lamented the loss of its tail, but was happy that the rest of itself was intact.

"Not a bad bargain, eh? Your tongue for my tail?" it said happily, looking at the crocodile.

The crocodile made no reply. In fact, it could not speak any more, now that its tongue was gone.

—Retold by Vindusar.





Oliver Twist

Fagin, Sikes and Monks, Oliver's half-brother, plan to swindle Oliver of his rightful estate. Sikes' companion, Nancy, meets Oliver's benefactor, Rose, in the company of Mr. Brownlow, but Nancy is being closely watched.



Nancy was desperate. She had told Rose that if she wished to communicate with her, she would be found every Sunday on London Bridge between the hours of eleven and midnight. Now it seemed she would not be able to go. "Let me leave!" she screamed. "Let me leave!" Sikes growled "The girl is stark raving mad." He grabbed her and forced her into a chair

Fagin watched all this with more than some interest and concern. Why was Nancy so anxious to leave? Had she conceived an attachment for some new friend? Her altered manner to her friends and her desperate anxiety to leave the house indicated something was afoot, and Fagin was determined to find out what it was.





The following Sunday night when the church bells were chiming three quarters past eleven, two figures emerged from an old carriage on London Bridge. It was a dark night and the mists of the river swirled around Mr. Brownlow and Rose, as they peered about them, looking for Nancy.



Presently, from the other side of the bridge came Nancy, followed by a figure which dodged from time to time into some of the recesses surrounding the piers of the bridge. The figure was that of one of Fagin's spies.



Suddenly seeing Rose standing on the bridge in the company of a gentleman, Nancy hurried towards them. "I am afraid to speak to you here," she told them. "Come with me down these steps." Taking Rose by the hand, she led the way down a set of landing stairs to the river.

"We will waste no time," Mr. Brownlow said, when they had reached the bottom. "I know you can be trusted. So I will tell you both without reserve that we will extort Monks' secret from him. In order to do this, it is necessary for you to deliver him into our hands. If he cannot be secured, then you must deliver up Fagin to us."



They talked for some time in hushed tones, but Fagin's assistant, young Bates could still hear what they were saying. When they had done, and were making their way up the stairs, he ran away at his utmost speed, making for Fagin's house as fast as his legs could carry him.



Some hours later, Fagin was sitting in his lair, with a face so distorted and pale that he looked less like a man than some hideous phantom from the grave. Stretched upon a mattress lay the youth who had overheard Nancy. From time to time, Fagin glanced at him, but his thoughts were really elsewhere.

Indeed they were. Detection and ruin and death now faced him. What was to be done? He sat there pondering, not taking the slightest heed of time until his quick ear was attracted by a footstep in the street. Presently the bell rang, and he crept downstairs to the door and opened it. "Your visit is well timed, Bill," Fagin said.



He led Bill Sikes up to his room, where he nodded towards the sleeping figure. "Suppose that lad was to betray us. Suppose he went stealing out at nights to find those most interested in us, and betrayed to them. What would you do, Bill?" Sikes replied, "I'd grind his skull under the heel of my boot, that's what I would do."

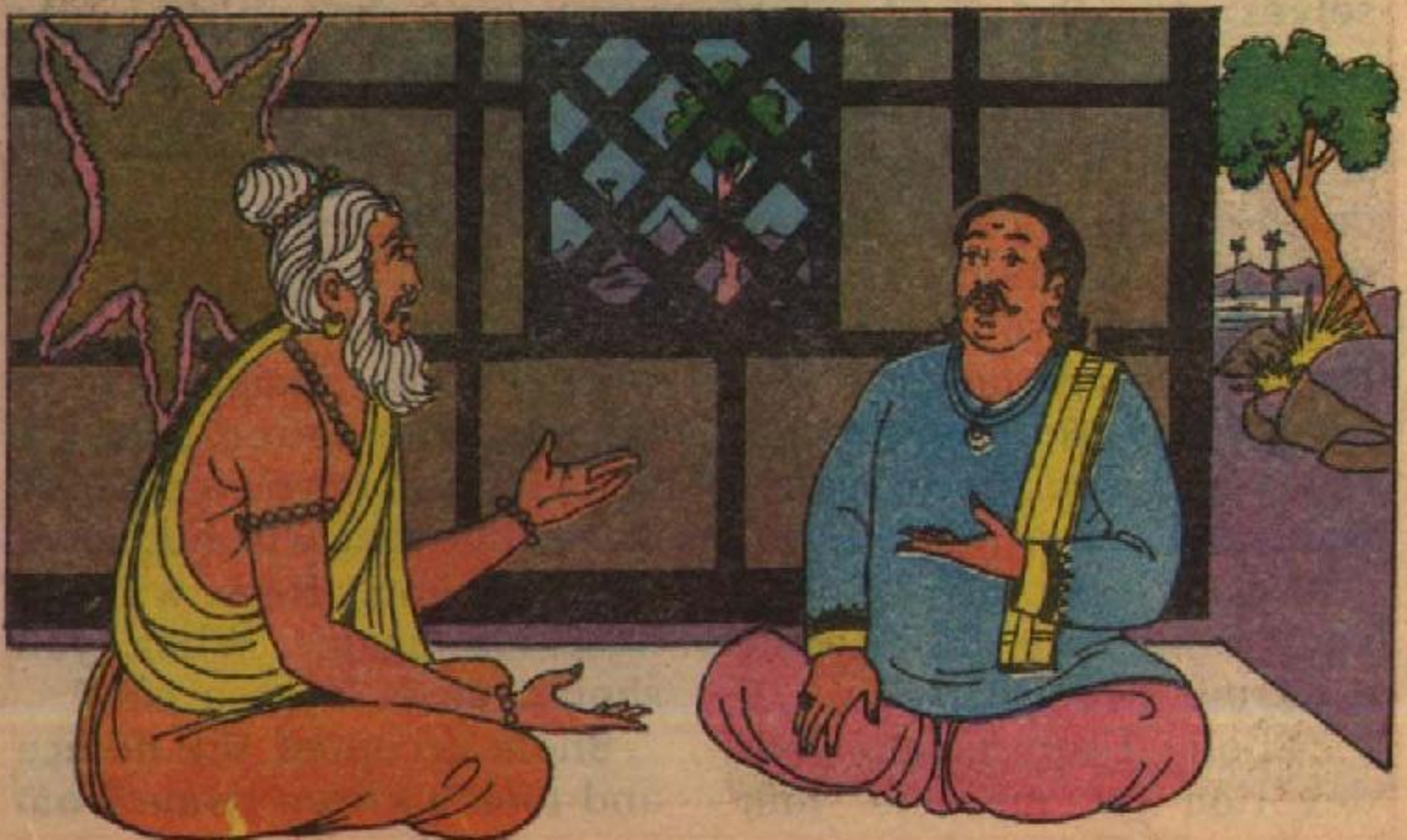
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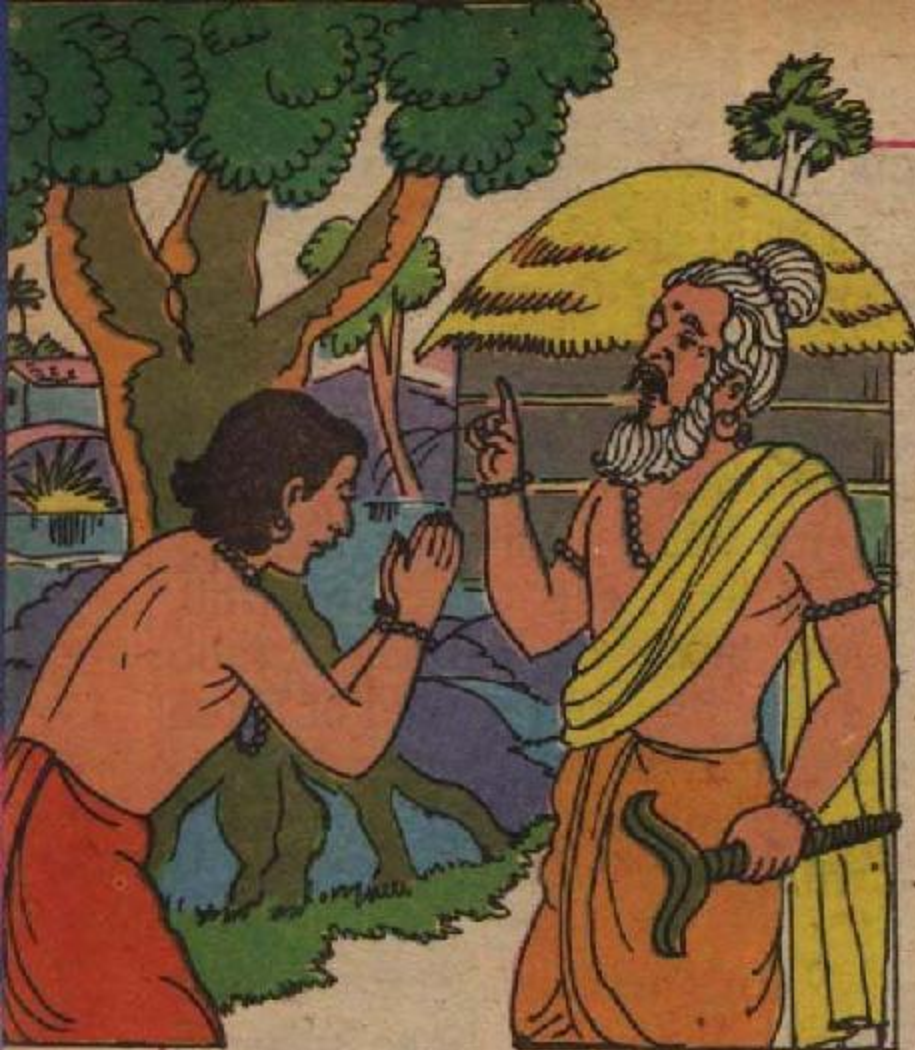
BHOLA BABA AND BHOLA BABU

On the river-bank lived a hermit named Siva Swamy. He lived in a small hut. Once a day he went into the nearby village. Whoever saw him invited him to his house and gave him some food. A meal a day was enough for the hermit. The local landlord was a devotee of the hermit. He wanted the hermit to receive rich offerings from him. But the hermit always refused to accept a single thing. Very politely he would tell the landlord, "My

boy, I really do not need anything. I am fully content with what I have within myself with the Grace of God. My body needs some food every day and a yard of linen from time to time. People keep me supplied with such things."

An orphan boy named Bhola who was once passing by the hermit's hut happened to hear the dialogue between the hermit and the landlord. He was much impressed. He





was even more impressed to see the landlord and his companions prostrating themselves to the half-naked hermit.

Bhola too prostrated himself to the hermit and stayed on there. He served the hermit with devotion. As days passed, his devotion for the hermit grew stronger.

One day the hermit got ready to leave the place for wandering as a pilgrim.

"Master! Let me go with you," said Bhola. "I'll become a hermit like you."

"Bhola! I appreciate your devotion for me and your

desire to become a hermit. But this is not the way for you. I can ask the landlord to employ you in his estate. He can even give you some land and you can live comfortably," said the hermit.

"Master! How do you chalk out such a course for me. I have no attraction for anything worldly. If you don't let me follow you, I'll live here in the hut deserted by you and practise austerities," said Bhola.

The hermit smiled and said nothing. He went away soon.

Bhola, now called Bhola Baba, continued to live in the hut. Like Siva Swamy, he too went into the village only once. He had for his worldly property nothing more than two pieces of linen and a jug.

One day he found one of his linens eaten away by rats. He felt quite disturbed. When he reported the incident to a villager, the latter said, "I will gladly give you a piece of linen. But that will not solve the problem. Rats will do mischief again. What you should do is keep a cat."

Bhola accepted the advice and took a kitten home from



another house-holder.

He needed milk for the cat. The villagers met his need, but one of them said, "Why don't you ask the benevolent landlord for a cow. You can have plenty of milk, without stirring from your hut, not only for your cat but also for yourself."

The suggestion sounded most sensible. Bhola went to the landlord who was quite well-disposed towards him because he had served Siva Swamy. Bhola returned with a fine milch-cow.

"Bhola Baba! All these lands around your hut belong

to the landlord. They are lying uncultivated. If you obtain the landlord's permission, I can cultivate them. I will give you half the yield and you won't have to depend on others for your food. What is more, you will get fodder for your cow," suggested a farmer.

The moment Bhola made the request to the landlord, the latter said, "Treat the lands between the river and the village as yours. I have no use for them."

Bhola was happy. The farmer was overjoyed. He began tilling the land on behalf of





Bhola. The yield was very good. The hut was demolished and a house was built with the farmer's help, for the paddy had to be stored. The farmer's wife and daughter raised a kitchen-garden behind the house and cooked for him too.

Next year the crop was still better and a lot of paddy was sold. Bhola received a good price for it.

"Listen, noble young man, it is necessary that someone your own looks after the household. You know my daughter well. I can assure you that she will make an

excellent wife. I propose that you marry her," said the farmer.

Bhola thought over the proposal. The girl offered to him in marriage was charming and hard-working indeed!

Bhola got married. He worked hard and prospered very well. He constructed a bigger house and was called Bhola Babu instead of Bhola Baba.

Meanwhile, the landlord had died. His son demanded back the lands which were in Bhola's possession. Bhola claimed that they had been gifted to him. The villagers were divided amongst them. Some supported the new landlord, some Bhola.

One evening some hoodlums set by the landlord tried to raid Bhola's house. Bhola's supporters tried to prevent them. A fight began.

It so happened that Siva Swamy returned to his old place just then. At the sight of the hermit the fighting stopped.

"Twentyfive years ago there was a hut here. My disciple, a young hermit, lived in that hut. Where is

he," asked Siva Swamy.

The old folks of the village who had come there attracted by the melee recognised him. But the first to fall at his feet was Bhola. He wailed.

The hermit raised him from the ground and patted him on the back. Other villagers and the young landlord also touched the hermit's feet.

The same evening the hermit settled the matter about the lands to the satisfaction of both the parties.

By midnight the master and the disciple sat facing each other.

"My master," said Bhola calmly, "How true were you when you told me that your way was not mine, that I was required to lead a worldly life."

The hermit only smiled.

"But, sir, nothing can stop me from following you now," Bhola said again.

"Yes, it is time for you to come out of the whirlpool. You have two sons grown up enough to take care of your wife and daughters," said the hermit.

Two or three days later Bhola followed the hermit, carrying nothing with him.



A CASE OF THOUGHT-READING

Laughs From Many Lands

In the town arrived a bearded stranger. His disciples claimed that he was a prophet. "How to believe it?" asked the leading men of the town. "I can read your thoughts," said the stranger.



The stranger whispered at each one's ear something which the others could not hear. Each one was impressed.



The prophet was only passing through the town. The gentlemen bowed to him, fed him and his disciples sumptuously and offered him some money.



After the stranger left, the leading men asked one another and found out that the prophet had whispered the same thing to all: "Just now you are wondering whether I'm a true prophet or not"





A Folktale

HOBGOBLINS IN A MARRIAGE

Suddenly, Jaidev remembered that his cousin Pushpa's marriage was to take place the next morning. Although it was getting dark, Jaidev decided to take the walk to the neighbouring village to reach on time for the preliminary ceremonies.

It was a full-moon night and Jaidev had no problem in going through the woods. He took long strides, very eager to reach the village before midnight.

Suddenly, two strange figures popped up before him. Jaidev was terror-stricken. He trembled all over, for he guessed they must be super-

natural beings.

"Where are you going, young man," asked one of the spirits. "We are only female hobgoblins, eager to mix with human beings," she introduced herself and her companion.

"To-the-marriage-of-Pushpa," replied Jaidev, his throat choked out of fear.

"We will not let you go unless you take us with you to the marriage," said the second hobgoblin.

"If I take you along with me, my uncle will beat me up," said the nervous Jaidev.

"If you don't take us with you, then we will beat you



black and blue," threatened the first spirit raising her voice.

"But, why have I to take you. You can go to the marriage yourselves; can't you," asked Jaidev, regaining a little courage.

"No, we cannot go there all by ourselves. We need the consent of a human being in order to participate in a ceremony of the human beings," they explained.

The only way to save himself was to consent to take them with him thought Jaidev.

As he emerged from the

dark street and entered the marriage-hall, he was surprised to see the two spirits dressed in beautiful sarees and bedecked in jewellery. He was very unhappy. He had certainly not done a good thing by leading two hobgoblins to as auspicious a ceremony as a marriage!

"What's happened, Jaidev," asked his uncle. (You seem to be unwell! Go and take rest in the room upstairs.)

Jaidev ran upstairs and dropped on the bed, unable to stand the tension any longer.

The first hobgoblin approached the bride's mother, Vasanti.

"Sister, what are the sweets you have made for the ceremony. I would like to inspect them myself," said the spirit and she introduced herself as the bridegroom's mother.

"Good God! I never knew that you had come with the bridegroom's party!" Vasanti exclaimed with pleasant surprise. And, too eager to impress the pompous lady, took her to the kitchen-store.

The hobgoblin settled herself comfortably near the sweet baskets and ate a few laddoos.

"Do you call this sweetmeat. Have you put enough sugar and ghee in them," asked the spirit haughtily.

Vasanti and her daughter Pushpa, who sat beside her, were struck dumb by her criticism.

The spirit then ate a few zelebis and said, "You have not employed cooks but carpenters to make these. These taste like wooden chips!"

"It's not true, sister, I've

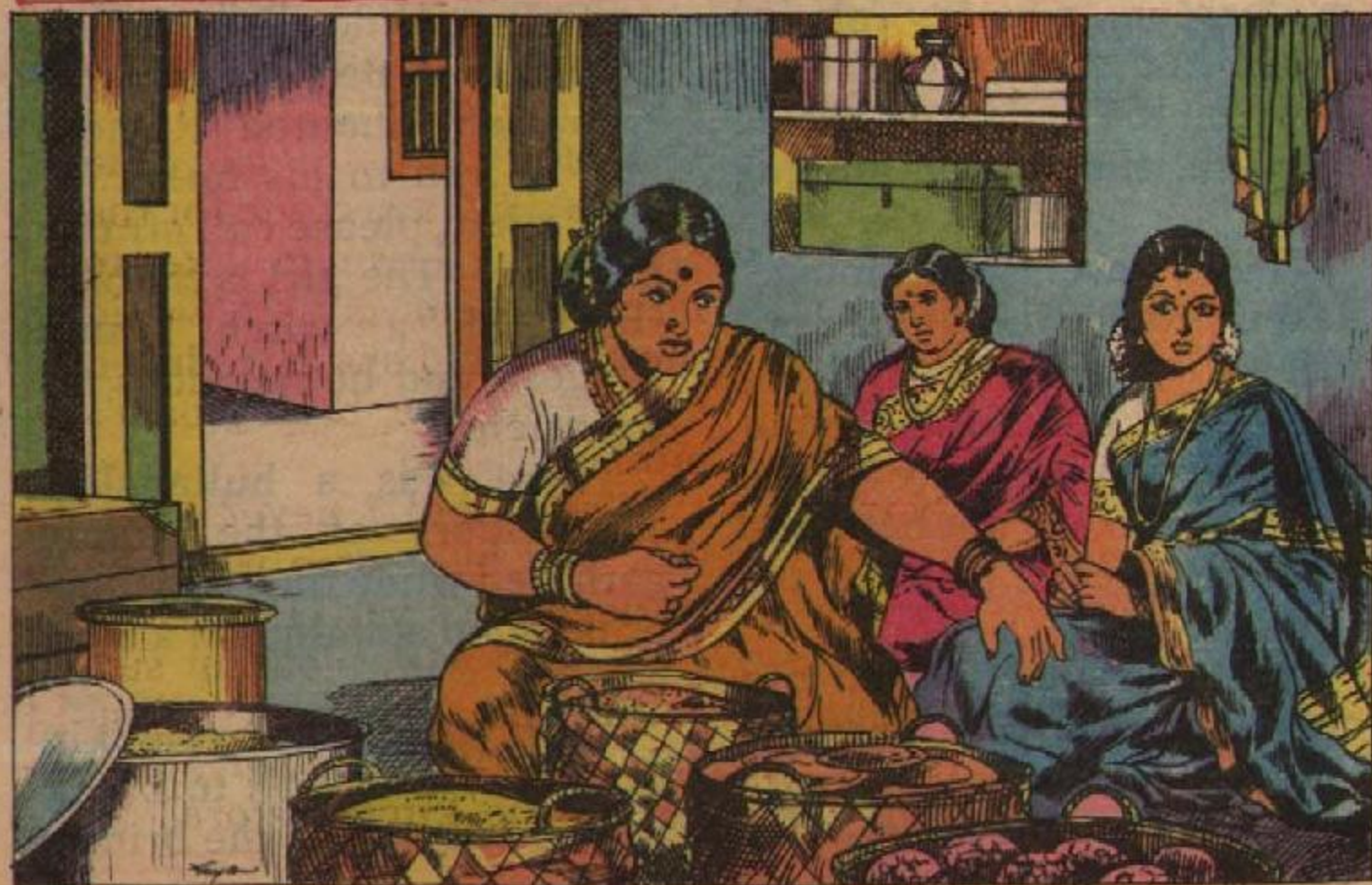
used the best ingredients and employed the best sweetmeat makers of our area!" replied Vasanti, trying to pacify the spirit.

"Really. Very good. Pack five baskets of the laddoos and zelebis for me. After the marriage I shall feed your daughter only on these rotten stuff," commented the spirit.

Pushpa got up and rushed out of the room. Vasanti followed her.

"Mother, I've decided not to get married into this family. How can I live with such a witch," said Pushpa, in tears.

Meanwhile the second hob-





goblin assumed the form of a young lady in bridal dress and went to Ramesh, the bridegroom, who lay relaxed in the house nearby. She sat down on the bedstead, beside Ramesh, and started fanning him.

"What are you doing," asked Ramesh, quite surprised.

"Hi, hi! I'm Pushpa, your wife-to-be. Is it not my duty to see that you are not bothered by mosquitoes," replied the spirit.

"It's all right, but you can do that after the marriage and not now. What will people say if they see us together

now," said an irritated Ramesh.

"Who cares!" replied Pushpa as she fanned faster and faster.

Suddenly she beat him hard with the handle of the fan, saying, "There! A big mosquito. I've killed it. Hi hi!"

Ramesh snatched away the fan and told her to get out of the room.

"Why are you shouting at me. Wait! Once the marriage is over, I shall shout at you for not cooking properly, for not washing the clothes clean..."

"What do you mean. You expect me to do all the household chores. Begone, you mad creature!" shouted Ramesh and he ran to his father.

"Father, please call off this marriage. The girl is nothing short of a witch!" said Ramesh and he narrated his experience.

There was a hullabaloo. The elders of the family gathered while the two witches laughed standing in a dark corner.

"Will you please explain in calm why you wish to break up the marriage" the bride's

uncle asked Ramesh.

When Ramesh narrated what had happened in his room, Pushpa who overheard him, fainted out of shock.

"Pushpa has not left her room for the past three hours except for going into the kitchen-store for a while to meet the bridegroom's mother." Then Vasanti narrated what all happened between herself and Renuka.

"Bridegroom's mother. She is thirty miles away, preparing for receiving her son and daughter-in-law!" exclaimed the bridegroom's father.

All stood stunned and aghast.

Only the priest understood the mystery for he was a necromancer too. He uttered a few hymns and threw into the air a few drops of water

from the Ganga. Immediately, as if out of the blue two black cats fell on the floor. The people chased them into a big wooden box and trapped them.

Only then Jaidev came down and told who were the two visitors he had brought and apologised to all.

All were amused. Laughter returned along with a sense of relief.

After the marriage rituals were over, the priest carried the wooden box in a cart into the forest and opened it after reciting some more hymns. The two black cats jumped out of it and ran away. "Never again can they enter the human locality. I have destroyed that power of theirs," he confided to his companions.



TOO HOT FOR COMFORT?

Apparently not—the scorching deserts of the world are home for an extraordinary variety of animals

THE great desert of the world must surely be the most inhospitable of all habitats for living creatures. Yet a surprising number of mammals and reptiles can survive conditions which are too tough for all but a few plants.

In these barren regions, the native animals have to endure extremes of heat, dire shortage of water and lack of cover from the sun and from their natural enemies. But evolution has a way of providing an answer to even the trickiest of problems.

A case in point are the agamas, lizards which can be found in many arid, rocky regions of the world. There is a spiny-tailed agama, found only in north-east Africa, which uses its powerful claws to dig a burrow more than two metres long to escape the heat of the mid-day sun. In winter, when temperatures can drop below freezing at night, it crawls into its burrow to hibernate.

The strange, spiny tail of this agama is a powerful weapon of attack. But, if need be, it can also serve the lizard in defence. If threatened by a snake, for instance, the agama will dive into the mouth of its burrow, spreading out its formidable array of spines to block the entrance.

The kangaroo rat is another desert dweller. Its name causes much confusion, because it is only distantly related to the true rat, and not at all to the kangaroo. Still further confusion arises because there is a rather similar animal in Australia called the rat kangaroo, a real marsupial as its name suggests.

Like the agama, the kangaroo rat spends most of the daylight hours underground, in a deep, often intricate maze of tunnels which it builds for itself. Remarkably, this rodent exists without drinking water at all. It will eat succulent plants when they are available; but its main sources of nutrition are dried seeds and roots. The breakdown of carbohydrates in its stomach seems to provide it with enough moisture.

Food Haul

The kangaroo rat covers wide areas in its

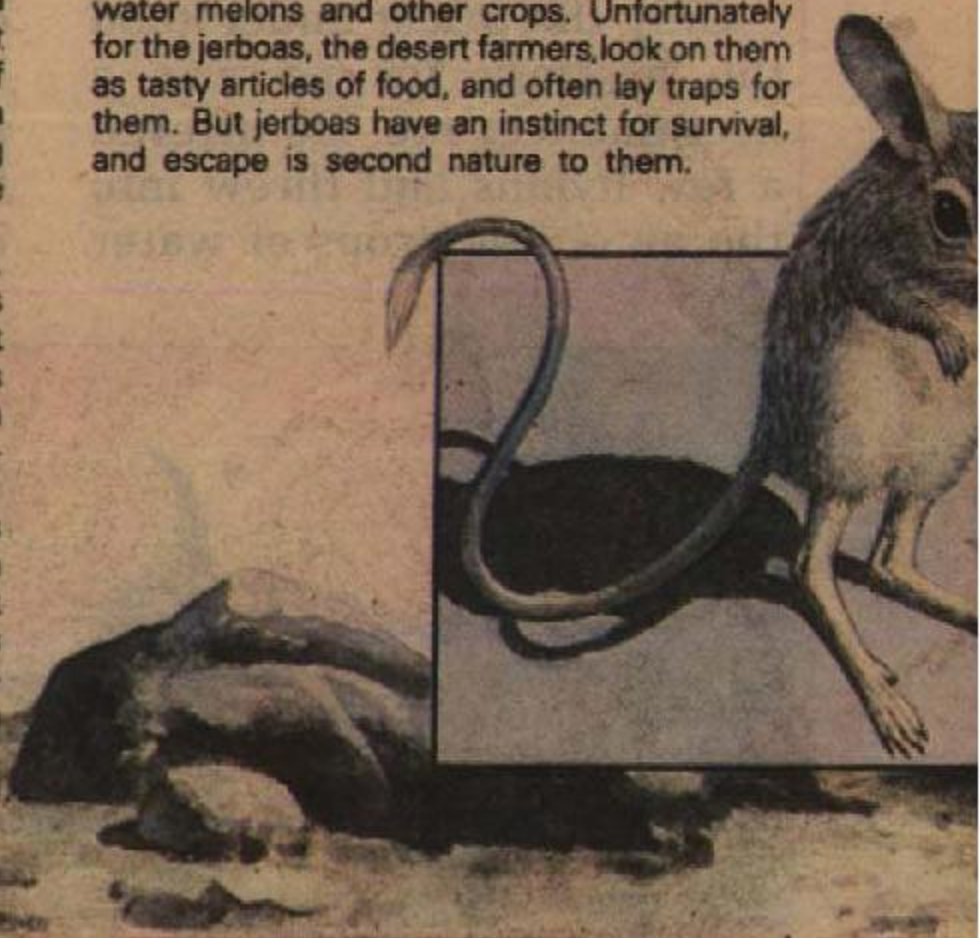
search for food, and returns to its burrow with its cheek pouches bulging. Much of this haul will be carefully dried and then stored away for future use when food may become scarce.

In common with many other desert animals, the kangaroo rat has highly sensitive ears, which can detect the approaching sounds of predators such as owls, or rattlesnakes. If need be, it can jump many times its own height to evade capture when danger seems imminent.

In the Sahara desert, one of the most common rodents is the jerboa, often called the desert rat. This animal was well known to the soldiers of the British Eighth Army, famous for the desert campaigns in World War Two. From it they took their nickname, the "Desert Rats".

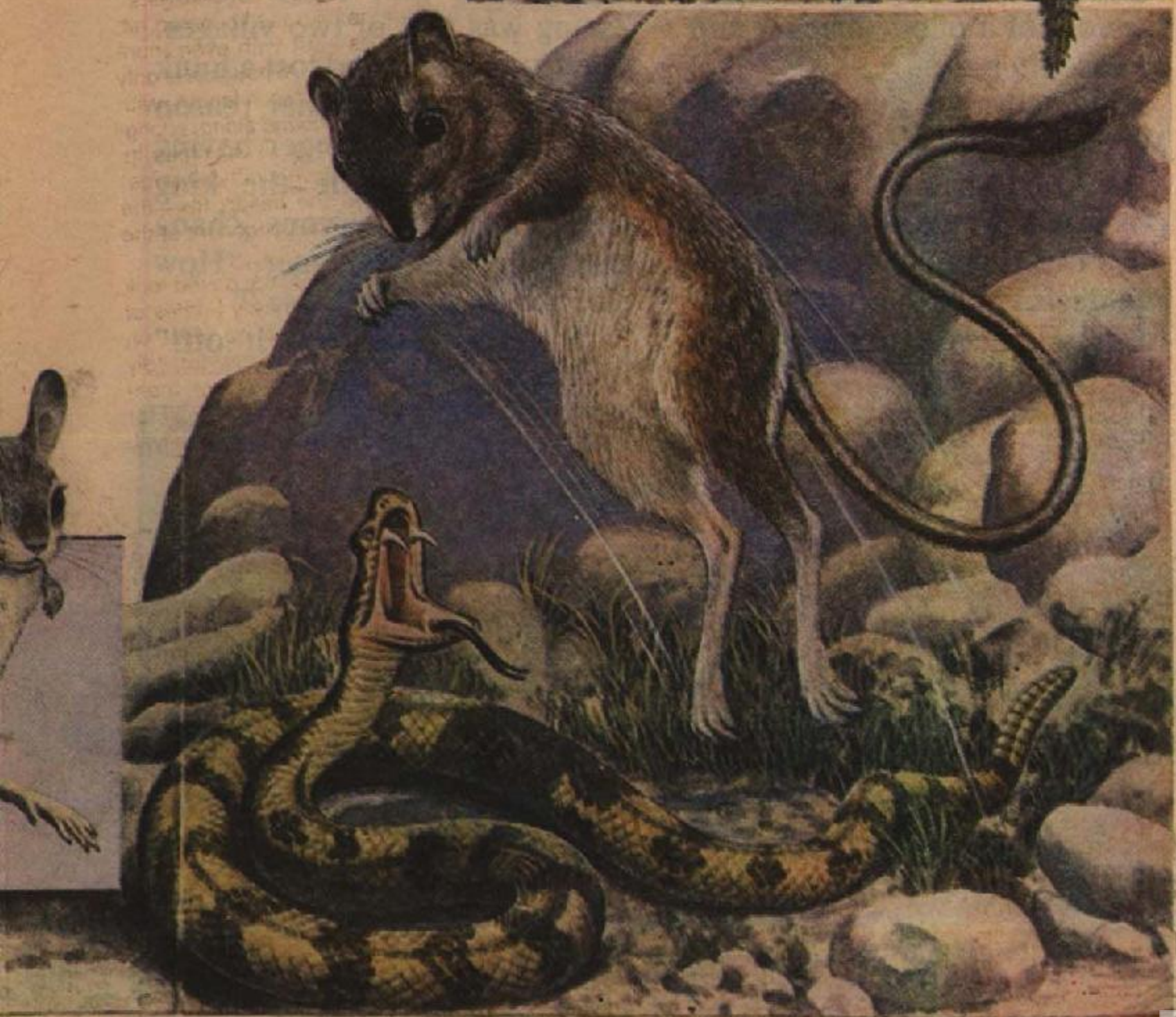
The jerboa looks rather like the kangaroo rat, and it has similar habits—but with even more astonishing jumping powers. Although it is only about ten or twelve centimetres in length, with a tail slightly longer, it can bound along, changing course rapidly, leaping up to 30 times its own length. This makes it a very difficult target for its enemies, such as the desert fox—the nickname of Rommel, the chief opponent of the Eighth Army.

Arabs farming on the edge of the desert look on jerboas as pests, for occasionally hordes of these rodents come out at night to feast on water melons and other crops. Unfortunately for the jerboas, the desert farmers look on them as tasty articles of food, and often lay traps for them. But jerboas have an instinct for survival, and escape is second nature to them.





THE DAY OF THE RAT



THE DAY THE LANDLORD SAT AS JUDGE

In olden days the landlords in China could do anything they liked.. One could become the commander of his own small army, his own minister and, as if that was not enough, could take the role of a public teacher and philosopher too.

Zhang was such a landlord. When the old judge of the area died, he decided to keep that position for himself. In those days the kings just approved of the decisions taken by the landlords. However, the king hap-

pened to pass by Zhang's territory. he decided to witness a trial conducted by the landlord before giving him the permission to become a judge.

The case that came before Zhang was that of two villagers. The first villager had lost a hunk of his nose for no other reason than the second villager having bitten it off. While the king looked on, the nervous Zhang asked the agreed villager, "How did you lose your nose?"

"Sir, this fellow bit it off!"



answered the man.

"How could you do it? the new judge asked the second villager.

"I did not do it, sir. He bit his nose off himself!"

"Is that possible?" demanded the judge. "How can one's mouth reach one's nose?"

"Sir, it is true that ordinarily one's mouth cannot reach one's nose, but this fellow stood on a stool and did that trick!" explained the second villager.

The landlord-turned-judge looked at the king who was listening to the proceedings attentively. Afraid of keeping the king waiting long, the landlord was in a hurry to pass his judgment. "Right, right. That is what the fellow must have done. Award him 40 strokes for telling lies before us. Now the court rises for lunch," said the landlord. Then he led the king into his dining hall and fed him sumptuously. But the king looked very grave.

"Was there anything wrong with my judgment?" Zhang asked his wife after the king had retired for an afternoon siesta. "Of course, you acted like a fool! Here is a stool. Stand on it and try to bite your own nose.



See if you succeed," said his wife.

Zhang jumped onto the stool and tried his best to achieve the feat, but failed. He looked very gloomy. "What should I do now? What will the king think of me?" he asked his wife.

"Reopen the trial and award the strokes to the second villager," advised his wife.

Accordingly, with the permission of the king, Zhang reopened the trial in the afternoon. No doubt, by that time the first villager had already received the punishment, but that did not matter. Now Zhang ordered for the second villager



to be equally punished.

His wife stood in the balcony, hiding herself from the king, but facing him. She wanted to be sure that everything went all right at least this time. Lest her husband should make any mistake regarding the number of strokes to be given to the guilty man, she showed four fingers indicating that he should receive forty strokes. The landlord who stole glances at her, said, "Four strokes!"

His wife clenched her teeth with disgust, Zhang who saw it shouted, "No, no. Not strokes. Bite off his nose!" He was sure

that is what his wife meant to be done! While saying this Zhang was looking at the king. Zhang's wife desperately tried to attract his attention towards herself. So, she pointed her hands at herself. Zhang took note of it and shouted with authority. "Wait, wait, my wife will bite off his nose!"

This was enough. The king could not check his amusement from bursting into a loud laugh. He stood up, ready to leave. Needless to say, Zhang's ambition to become a judge remained unfulfilled.

The family had a guest. He was a charming old man of eighty—noble in bearing, courteous in conduct and kind in words.

"I won't mind growing old if I could be that charming," commented the twelve year old boy after the guest had left.

"If you want to be like him, better begin today. He did not become that charming with a sudden decision," said the mother.



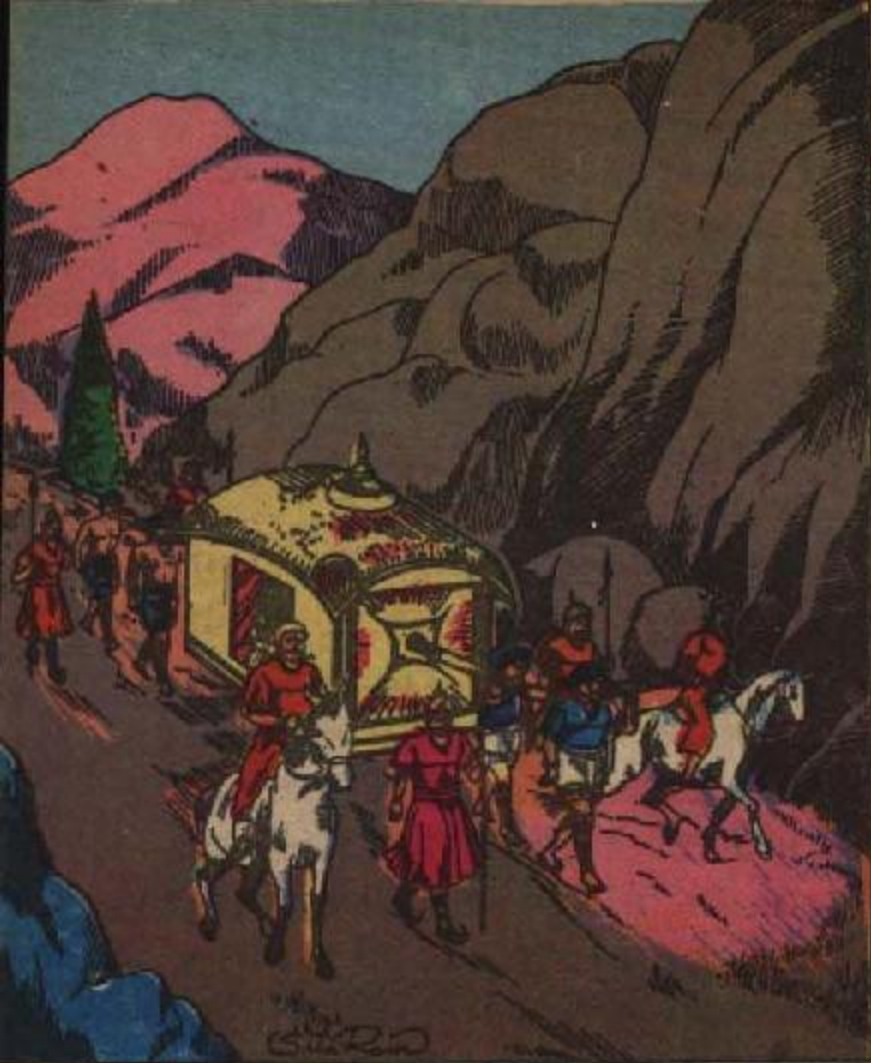


New Tales of King Vikram
and the Vampire

THE MIND OF A PRINCESS

Dark was the night and weird the atmosphere. It rained from time to time. At the intervals of thunderclaps and moaning of jackals could be heard the eerie laughter of ghosts. Flashes of lightning showed fearful faces.

But King Vikram swerved not. He climbed the ancient tree once again and brought the corpse down. However, as soon as he began crossing the desolate cremation ground, the vampire that possessed the corpse said, "O King, I do not know what is the trophy you have in your mind for which you are taking such pains. Whatever it be, you are surely looking forward to it with great eagerness. But are you sure that your eagerness will remain undiminished till you win the trophy. Let me tell you a story to illustrate my doubt.



Pay attention to it. This might bring you some relief.”

The vampire went on: Princess Suvarna of Vijaypuri was returning from her maternal uncle's house at Rashminagar. She was in a bejewelled palanquin borne by able-bodied bearers. Six of her maids walked on both sides of the palanquin. In front of the palanquin and behind it were her bodyguards. Some of them were walking; some others were riding horses at slow speed.

It was late in the evening. The zigzag road passed through a mountain pass. The

fort of Vijaypuri was only two hours way from the pass. The procession wended its way leisurely.

Suddenly the hills seemed to shake with fearful shouts. Bandits jumped from their hidings in both sides of the pass. Brandishing swords, they stopped the palanquin. The maids of the princess screamed in panic; the bodyguards rushed forward to fight the gang. But the bandits outnumbered them. Besides, the bodyguards were not prepared to face such a situation. The road between Vijaypuri and Rashminagar used to be safe. They did not know that the gang of bandits had just arrived there from another kingdom.

The bandits pushed the bodyguards to a corner. They were about to ransack the palanquin when something still more unexpected happened. A boulder came rolling down from a hill-top and smashed the leader of the gang and two of his lieutenants. Before the other members of the gang knew what to do, they were surprised by threats. A group of young men fell on them. The ban-

bits had grown nervous at their leader's death. They were easily cornered.

The young men were members of a wrestling club. They had been to the town to participate in a wrestling match. Their captain, Shekhar was a brave young man. In fact, he had received a medal from the princess some months ago, after being declared as the champion-wrestler of Vijaypuri. From the hill-top Shekhar had observed the suspicious movement of the bandits. In the moonlight he had also seen the party of the princess advancing along the pass. With bated breath he

and his friends waited to see what would happen. They acted just in time to save the princess from humiliation. They rolled the boulder first and attacked the gang next.

The princess and her maids, escorted by some of the bodyguards, left for the fort. Shekhar, his friends and the other bodyguards detained the gang there. Two riders galloped as fast as they could to inform the king about the happening. Promptly soldiers arrived on the spot and took charge of the bandits.

Shekhar was received in the court the next day. The





king thanked him for his invaluable help and asked him what he would like to have as reward.

"Your Majesty, please allow me to meet the princess and receive my reward from her," said Shekhar.

The king had no objection to this. As desired by Shekhar, he was allowed to meet the princess alone.

"I am most grateful to you. What reward will you like to have," asked the princess.

"Will you promise to grant what I ask of you."

"I can promise that I will grant your request only if

it is not beyond my power to do so," said the princess.

"O Princess, you had known me before, when I had the occasion to receive a trophy from you. You have known me once again. Do you appreciate my valour."

"I do. I am full of praise for you."

"Thank you. I come of a good family. Please consent to marry me. You cannot say that this is not within your power!"

The princess sat silent for some time. Then calmly she said, "I am not sure whether this is within or beyond my power. Anyway, I have no objection to marrying you. Let me tell my father."

Shekhar's face brightened up. He retired to the royal guest house.

The princess told the king at night, "Father, Shekhar has saved me not only from humiliation, but also from possible death. Had the bandits laid their hands on me, I would have consumed the deadly poison I always carry with me. He wishes to marry me. Why not grant his wish."

"Do you wish to marry him" asked the king.

"Well, father, I have no objection to marrying a commoner," replied the princess.

"We will see about it," said the king.

Next day the king quietly informed Shekhar that it was not possible to grant his wish. Shekhar met the princess privately and said that he loves her so much that he shall die if he cannot marry her.

"Wait for some time. I will try to persuade my father to let us marry," said the princess.

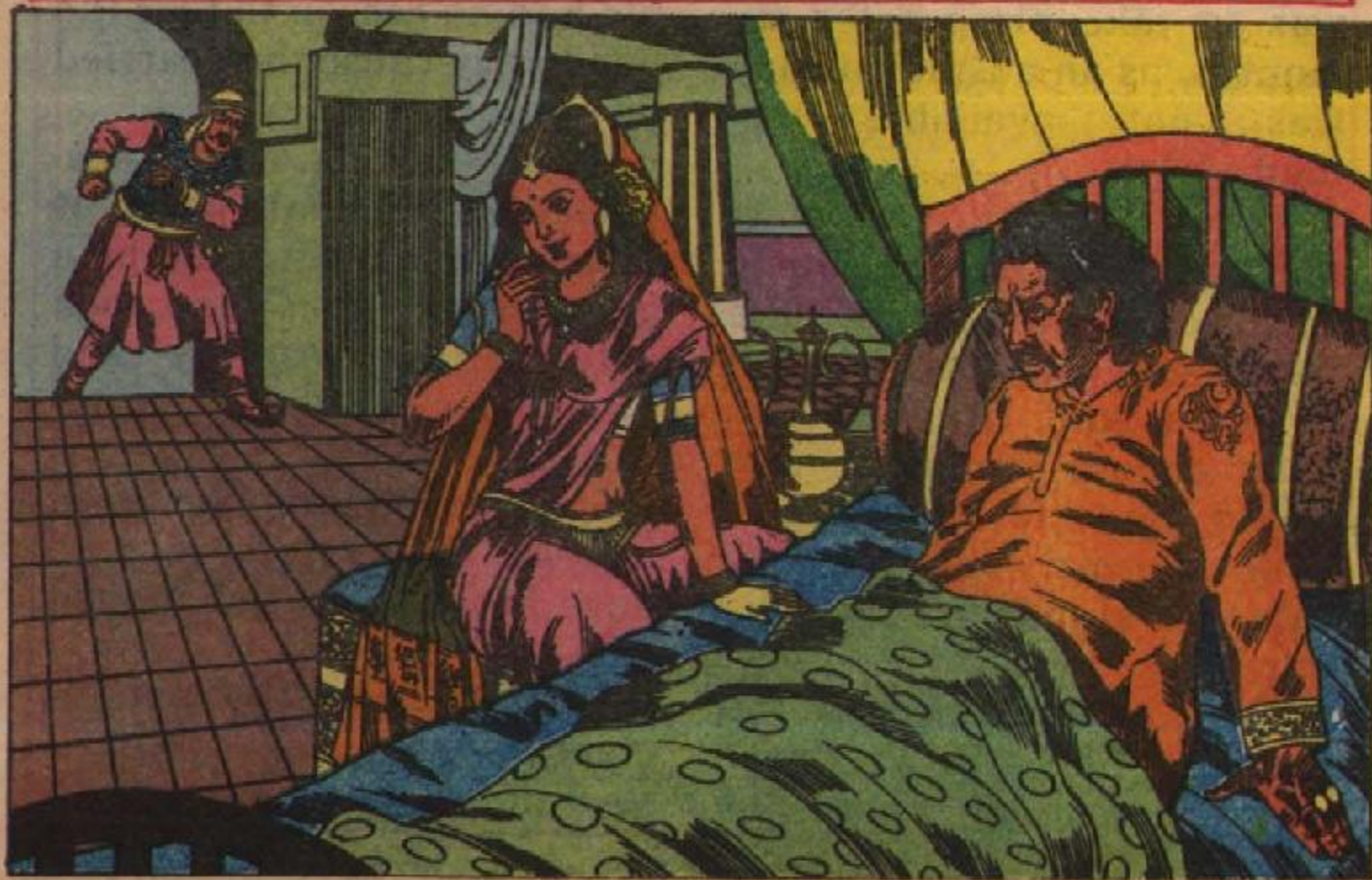
Shekhar went away to his village.

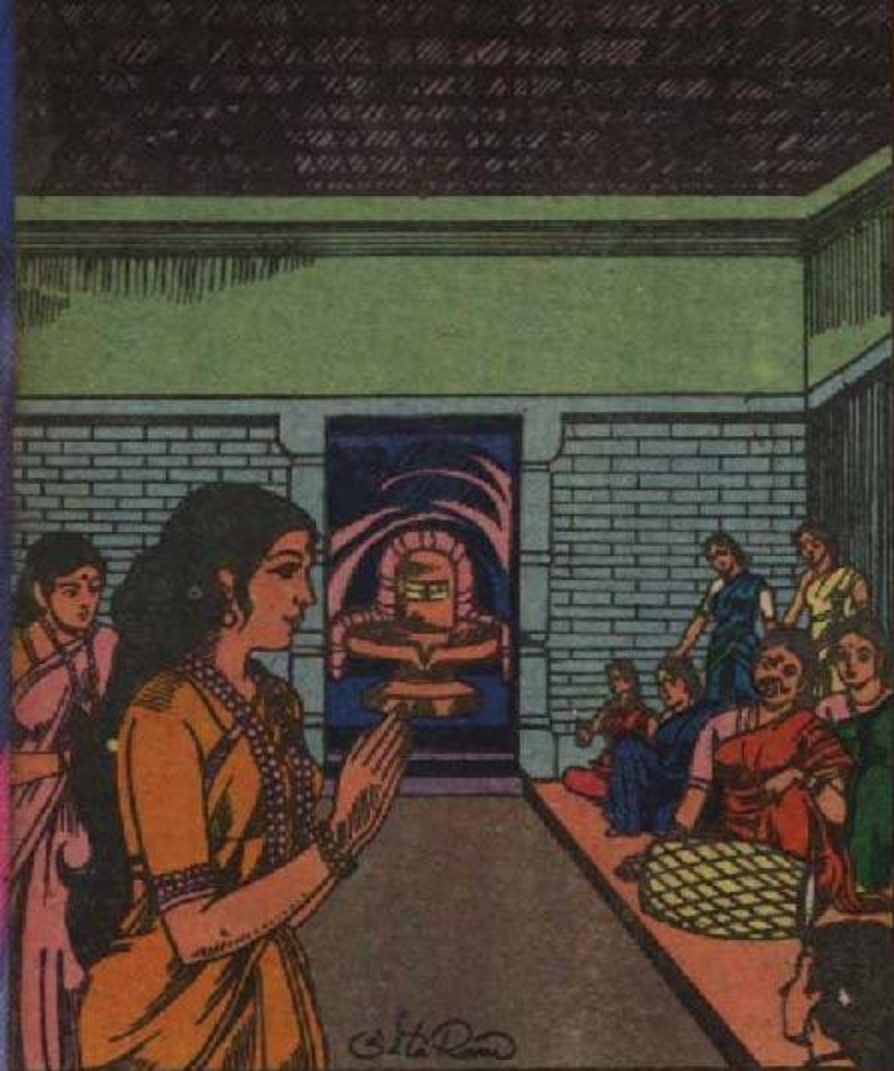
A year passed. The king fell ill. "I must settle your

marriage before I die, my child," the king said. The princess thought that it was time for her to bring up Shekhar's proposal once again. But before she could do that, a grave news reached the palace. The king's only son who was returning home from the gurukul at the news of the king's illness, had died on the road because of a fall from the horse-back.

The sick king died of shock.

The princess was in deep distress. But she knew that she must be firm at this crisis. With the death of her only brother, she had become the heir to the throne.





She ruled the country, though the formal coronation was to take place after six months, as an auspicious day was not available immediately.

"Your Majesty, you must marry now. In normal course you would have married a prince and become the queen of some land. But now you must choose somebody who would agree to stay here as your consort. You have to rule the kingdom," said the ministers.

"You are right," said the princess. She sent a private messenger to Shekhar. But

Shekhar was not to be found.

The princess decided to wait.

One day she had a desire to see the condition of the common people. An opportunity came. On the border of Vijaypuri there was a Siva temple which womenfolk visited for the Sivaratri night. The princess dressed herself like an ordinary devotee and mingled with a group of women pilgrims and proceeded towards the temple.

Since some months a new gang of bandits had been reported to be plundering travellers in the hilly area. But the pilgrims to the temple had no reason to fear the bandits, because they carried no valuables.

It was evening. Most unexpectedly the small party of pilgrims was confronted by a gang of bandits. They took hold of the princess and forced her to enter a horse-carriage.

She was led into a house in a gorge. "Don't worry girl, we have brought you for a good cause."

Within hours the bandit-chief came in. He surveyed her and said, "I wanted to

marry a beautiful girl. They have chosen well. It seems I had seen you some day, somewhere."

"Are you not Shekhar," asked the princess.

The bandit-chief gave a start. "How did you know my name. I am known as Raghu Sardar!" he said.

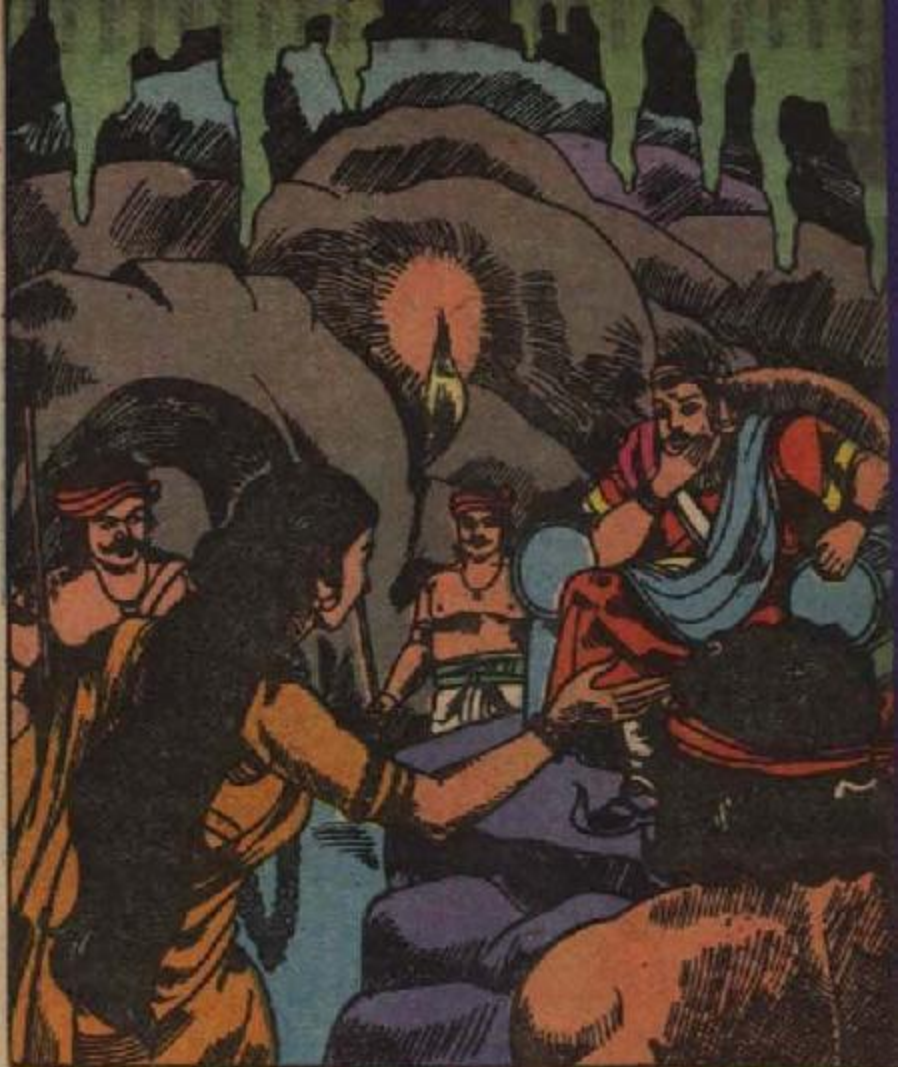
"Don't you recognise me. I am the princess. Some months ago I sent for you, desiring to marry you. But my messenger did not find you," said the princess.

"How wonderful! I never thought that you will really come to marry me. What a happy coincidence that my people, asked to find a beautiful girl for me, chanced upon you! Our meeting is providential!"

"Yes, it is providential," agreed the princess.

Shekhar was in a joyous mood. He had no reason to guard the princess, for the princess herself was looking for him. The princess freely moved about.

Even though she was travelling in disguise with some pilgrim women, some of her officers, also in disguise,



were following her. They soon located the princess. The princess, through her window, signalled to them.

At midnight a large army raided Shekhar's camp and arrested all. The princess, back at the palace, ordered for their trial as criminals.

The vampire paused for a moment and then asked King Vikram in a challenging tone. "O King, what kind of person was this princess. She was looking forward to marrying Shekhar. When Shekhar took her away from the pilgrims and proposed marriage, she betrayed him. I have yet

another doubt. Had she not agreed with Shekhar that their meeting was providential. Was she just lying. Answer me, if you can. Should you keep mum despite your knowledge of the answers, your head would roll off your neck."

Forthwith replied King Vikram: "The princess was brave and wise. There is nothing to suggest that she was eager to marry Shekhar. Since she had not set her heart on anybody in particular, she had no objection to marrying Shekhar who had saved her from danger. Had Shekhar lived a normal life, she would have married her. But Shekhar had become a bandit. His people had kidnapped her not knowing who she was. That means Shekhar

just wanted a beautiful girl and not the princess in particular."

"The princess was willing to marry Shekhar the saviour, not Shekhar the bandit!"

"While Shekhar described their meeting as providential for one reason, the princess called it providential for a different reason. Her meeting Shekhar in this situation showed to her that Shekhar had become a bandit. Had she not known this, she would have perhaps married him only to repent later, upon coming to know his real character."

No sooner had the king concluded his reply than the vampire, along with the corpse, gave him the slip.

-Vindusar



DURMADA

The Danger of Impersonation

Urvashi, the nymph in the court of Indra fell in love with Pururavas, a great king of the Lunar dynasty. They married afterwards when Urvashi came down to earth.

Earlier Durmada, the general of the Gundharva king, had desired to marry Urvashi. His proposal had been rejected. One day he came to know that Urvashi had an appointment with Pururavas at Nandan Kanan, at night. Being a Gundharva, Durmada could assume many forms. He made himself look like Pururavas and appeared in the celestial garden ahead of time. On sighting Urvashi, he garlanded her and Urvashi talked to him sweetly.

Just then the real Pururavas reached the spot and Durmada laughed. Urvashi then realised her own mistake and Durmada's mischief. She cursed Durmada to become a demon. However, as Durmada deeply repented for his mischief of impersonation, she modified her curse and said that he shall be born as a human being and get killed in a battle. It happened as said by Urvashi.





WHO IS MORE WORTHY?

Long ago, the kingdom of Manipur was ruled by King Sudarshan. He was loved by his people for his justice, wide-heartedness and his religious temperament. But, above all, he was known for his love of poetry.

Once, the king desired to honour the best poet of his kingdom on his birthday by giving one thousand gold coins. Accordingly, an announcement was made in all the villages and towns of his kingdom.

The king had a childhood friend, Sashidhar, who was a highly gifted poet. He had written several poems in honour of the king and had won his appreciation many a time.

A few days after the announcement, Sashidhar invited a few of his poet-friends to

his house. After the dinner, when they were discussing about poetry, one of them said, "You'll all be surprised to know that the king has selected Kavi Raman as the best poet of the year."

"It is hard to believe it," said another poet. "When Kavi Sashidhar, being the best friend of the king, does not have any idea of the one chosen for the honour, how can we trust your news?" asked the other man.

"The wife of the messenger who was sent to Kavi Raman informed my wife yesterday. That's why I am inclined to accept the news as true," replied the first one.

That night Kavi Sashidhar was unable to get any sleep. He was very eager to get the honour and, in fact, many of his friends

had also told him that he would be the one to receive the honour.

Next morning, when the king came to the court, Sashidhar approached him and said, "Maharaj, rumours are afloat in the kingdom that you have selected a little-known poet as the best poet and that you are going to honour him on your birthday. I wish to know if it is true."

"Kavi Sashidhar, what you have heard is true. I have selected Kavi Raman for the honour," replied the king with a smile.

"Maharaj, I always believed that you loved my poetry and that you considered me as the best poet. How wrong I was?" said Sashidhar, heaving a sigh of anguish.

"Kavi, you have always been a great poet and shall always remain so. But, recently, I read some poems of Kavi Raman and I find that he is truly an inspired poet. He is poor and is hardly known as a poet. But he has never sought the honour of the court. I consider it my duty to locate the talented people in our



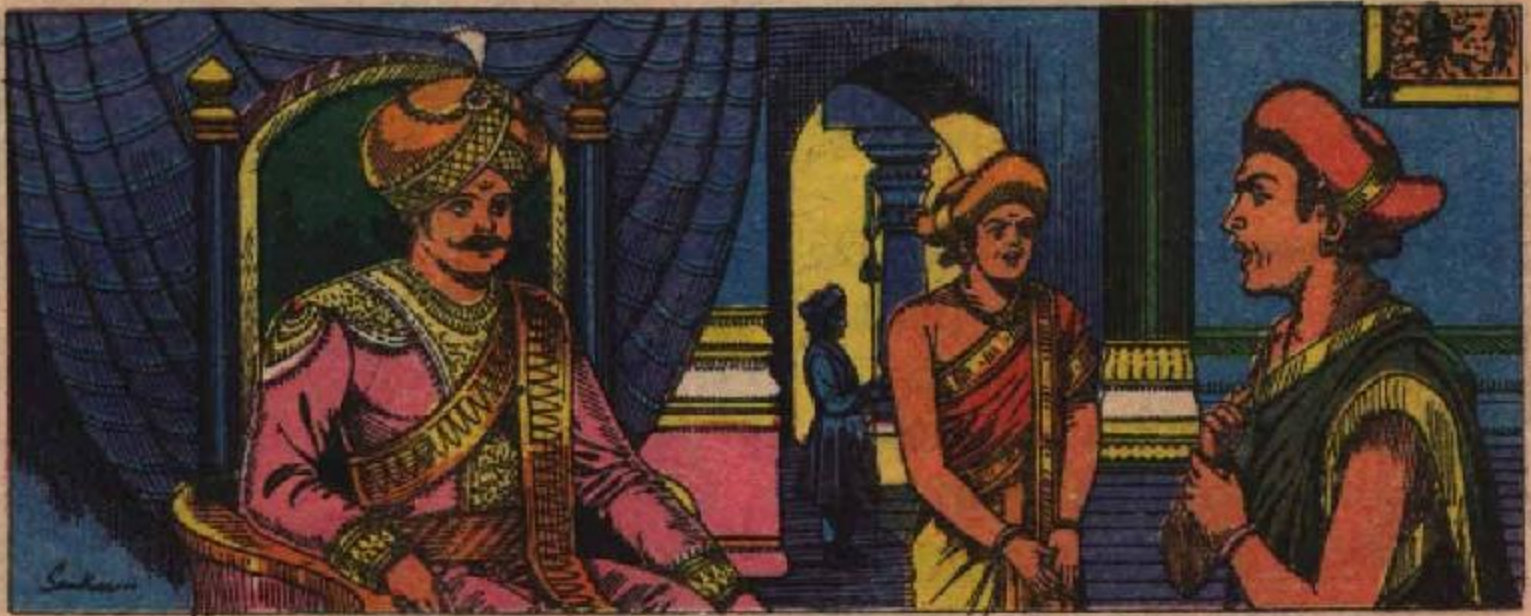
kingdom and to honour them," explained the king.

Just then a messenger came to the king and reported, "Maharaj, a gentleman named Raman who has come from a far off town, seeks your audience."

"Let him come in," replied the king.

"Maharaj, now you see for yourself—Raman has come running to claim the reward even before your birthday! How very greedy he is!"

No sooner had Sashidhar completed the sentence, then Raman dashed into the court and stood before the king breathless.



"You seem to be in a great hurry" observed the king. There was irony in his voice.

"Maharaj, pardon me for coming in such a haste. I came rushing to know why I am being honoured," said Raman.

"You need not pretend innocent," said Sashidhar tauntingly. "You need not cover your over-anxiety to get the reward by false excuses."

"No Maharaj, I am not at all pretending," said Raman looking at the king. "I know that in your court you have a great poet. He is Kavi Sashidhar. I have no doubt that if one deserves to be honoured, it is he. I am just an ordinary poet when

compared to him. If you can explain why you have selected me and not Kavi Sashidhar, only then shall I accept your honour!" said Raman humbly but sternly.

The king looked surprised as well as delighted.

Sashidhar stepped forward and said, his voice choked with emotion, "I am Kavi Sashidhar, I am yet to know your poetic talent, but, I'm sure that as a man you are much greater than I am. I congratulate our beloved Maharaja for his choice."

The king too felt happy on hearing Sashidhar. On his birthday, the king honoured both Raman and Sashidhar.

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TEMPLES OF INDIA

SHRINE FOR THE LORD OF THE MOON

According to a legend, there was a time when the moon never waned. It shone in its full splendour all the nights of the month throughout the year. This was in the mythical era.

The Moon-god was the son-in-law of King Daksha. Once, because the Moon-god violated a certain principle, Daksha cast a terrible curse on him. As a result he began to wane.



Before the Moon had totally disappeared, the other gods pleaded with King Daksha to withdraw his curse. He could not withdraw it, but modified it, so that the moon waned for a fortnight and then began regaining his stature in the next fortnight.



But for this to be possible, the Moon-god was advised to visit a sacred spot on the sea and pray to Lord Siva while bathing in the sea. The Moon-god did so. Because he regained his splendour there, the place became known as *Prabhas*, meaning splendour.

The Moon-god's sojourn at the place and his invocation of Lord Siva there became known. People began worshipping Siva at Prabhas and called the Deity Somanath or the Lord of Soma, Soma being the name of the Moon-god.



We do not know when the earliest temple to Lord Siva had been built at Prabhas. It was in ruins when King Dharmasena IV ruled the region in the 6th-7th century. He built a new temple to the Deity.



The temple was reconstructed in the 8th century. Thereafter it became a prominent place of pilgrimage. Devotees from all over the country visited it. Kings and commoners made offerings in gold and jewellery in large quantities. Shops and guest-houses were built around the shrine.



Early in the 12th century, Muhammad of Ghazni invaded India. He heard about the great treasures of Somanath and marched to plunder the temple. The news of the advancing invaders reached the local people.

The local ruler sent his soldiers to protect the temple. But the resistance against the powerful invaders could not continue for long. The local soldiers were killed. Then the common people came forward to do their best to dispel the vandals. They were mercilessly killed.





The priests were ready to surrender the wealth of the temple, but they were anxious to protect the image of the Deity. They and other devotees, five hundred of them, arrayed in front of the temple to appeal to the invaders to be sensible. These unarmed people too were massacred.

After fifty thousand people had given their lives, Muhammad's men plundered the temple thoroughly and shattered the image too. They decamped with booty which far exceeded their expectation.



The new temple built after this was destroyed in the 13th century by a general of Alla-ud-din Khilji. The temple was built again, but was reduced to pebbles at Aurangazeb's order in the 18th century. Ahalya Bai, Rani of Indore, rebuilt the shrine. Yet another temple was built in recent times, inaugurated in 1951.



A FINE MATCH

Jagan had just been married. He stepped into a big cloth-shop to get a sari for his wife. After some time he came out of the shop, a costly saree tucked under his arm-pit.

When he reached home and presented it to his wife, Leela, she asked him, "How did you find the money for such an expensive sari?"

Jagan fumbled. Leela's eyes glittered with curiosity. "Did you pinch it?" she asked with a giggle.

That emboldened Jagan to come out with the truth.

"There was a big crowd in the shop. At the right moment, when no one was watching me, I quietly left the shop with it," replied Jagan.

Leela was very happy to realise that she had found a husband who matched her mentality.

There were both adept at stealing small things from neighbours. As soon as they collected enough things from one locality, they shifted their residence to another locality.

This way they shifted once to Amberpet Colony.

As soon as they had settled down in their new residence, Leela plucked a few flowers from a park and visited her neighbour.

"Sister," she said when the lady of the house opened the door, "I am Leela, your next door neighbour. Before my marriage, I used to offer flowers daily to my elder sister. Now, let me have the privilege of offering you the flowers, for, you are like my elder sister."

Her sweet tongue, her gentle behaviour, quickly won her the friendship of all the ladies of the



neighbourhood.

Soon the couple started paying social visits to different houses in the area. As one of them would engage the people in the house in a lovely conversation, the other would be on the look out for opportunities to steal some thing or the other.

From time to time Jagan carried the booty to a dealer in stolen goods.

One day, when the ladies of the locality had gathered in a park in order to celebrate a festival, Leela drew their attention to herself and said, "Sisters, I wish to alert you about a very sad thing that has been happen-

ing in the recent days. when we had shifted to this locality, there was hardly a case of theft reported. But, in the recent weeks, I've been losing from my house all kinds of things—big and small."

The other ladies, who were in fact waiting for such an opportunity, told about the thefts in their houses.

"Sisters, do not worry. I promise you that I shall contact the authorities and see that the thieves are behind bars in a short time," assured Leela.

Leela was sure that if she came out first with the complaints, no one would suspect her and her husband for their crimes. And it really happened that no one suspected them; the couple continued to steal freely.

One day, Leela told her husband, "In our neighbour's house there is a huge bunch of bananas. We must get it tonight."

As the night became dark, the couple, quietly walked towards the compound wall of their neighbour. Jagan jumped over it, cut the big bunch of bananas and passed it over the wall to Leela who was eagerly waiting for it. They carried it to the terrace of their house and left it

there.

Next morning, Jagan woke up with a start as he heard a shriek from his wife in the kitchen. "My utensils! They have all vanished!" cried Leela.

Realising what had happened, Jagan rushed to the room where he had kept his box of clothes. "Oh my money, my money! It has all been stolen!" he shouted.

The neighbours heard their cries and came running to the house. They were shocked to see the couple in distress.

In all this hullabaloo, the next door neighbour spotted the bunch of bananas and she

shouted, "My bunch of bananas! In the morning I was surprised to see it missing from my garden and now I find it here! How did it come here, Leela?"

The couple could not answer, for they were themselves surprised to see it inside their room. And suddenly the neighbour noticed a scrap of paper stuck to the bunch. She picked it up and read aloud what was written on it:

"I'm a wanderer in search of a job. Till today I had not been a thief. But, tonight I saw you busy stealing a bunch of bananas from your neighbour's. I sneaked into your house and hid





myself in the kitchen. When you came home after committing the theft, I heard you discuss about your activities—how you steal goods from your neighbours and where you have kept the money you have got by selling the booty. I am taking with me all the money hidden under the bundle of clothes. After all it is not yours! I brought down the bunch of bananas from the terrace in order to carry it into its rightful owner's compound. But the task is risky. So I leave it here."

The neighbours were stunned. They searched Jagan's house and found a number of their lost goods.

However, they were so embarrassed that they did not report the couple to the police. Jagan and Leela were looked upon as good friends by them, after all!

That night, the couple left the town under cover of darkness.

People of the town long remembered the unknown wanderer who had opened their eyes to the tricksters!

Joy Regrets

Joy was having his first lesson from his tutor. Upon the tutor saying something wrong, Joy blurted out. "You're a fool!"

Joy's mother who heard the remark from the next room called Joy to her side and said sternly, "You must express your regret to your teacher!"

The hesitant Joy returned to his tutor and said, "I regret so much that you're a fool. sir!"

IN A HURRY

A group of tourists were driving through a village. It was hot noon and they saw a river shaded by trees.

A villager stood nearby.

"Man, do you have snakes or leeches in this river?" asked the foreigners.

"You see, we had a large number of snakes. But once there was a big flood. The bigger river two miles away overflowed and..."

"You villagers are very talkative. We are in a hurry and we are not interested in history. Are there snakes in the river now? Tell us Yes or No!" asked the leader of the group impatiently.

"No," said the villagers.

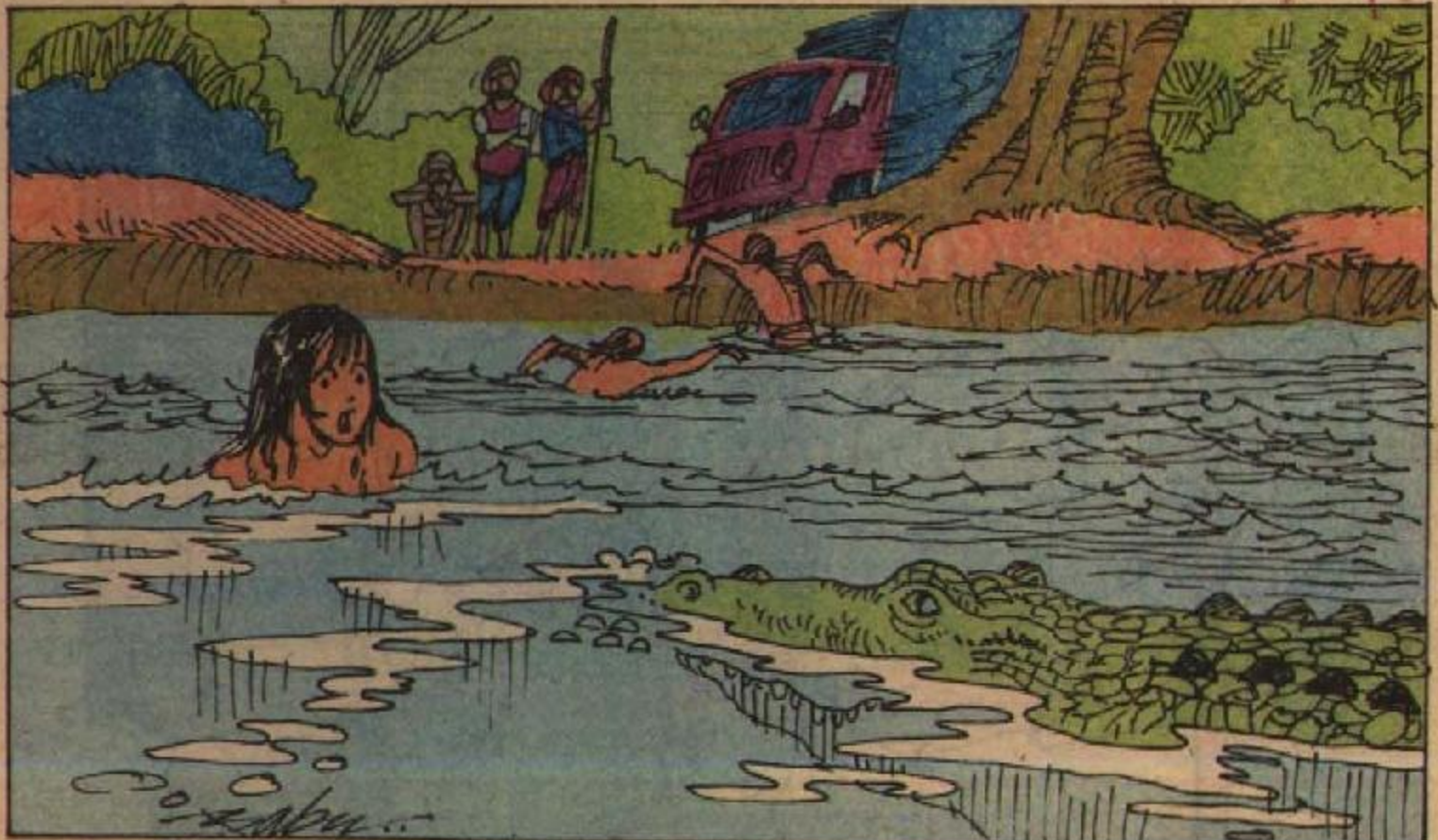
The enthusiastic tourists changed into towels and plunged into the river. Just then they located a sinister head rising over the waters.

"What is that?" asked one of the bathers.

"An alligator!" replied the villager.

The bathers screamed and made a race to reach the shore.

"The flood brought alligators from the bigger river into our small river and they ate all the snakes," the villager concluded his statement.



THE THREE BIG GENTLEMEN

"Who is *John Bull*, Grandpa? I've come across the gentleman's name so many times, but I do not know who he is." As usual Rajesh was candid with his query.

"Why, Rajesh, you have met *John Bull* so many times and talked to him too!"

"Oh no, never!" said a surprised Rajesh.

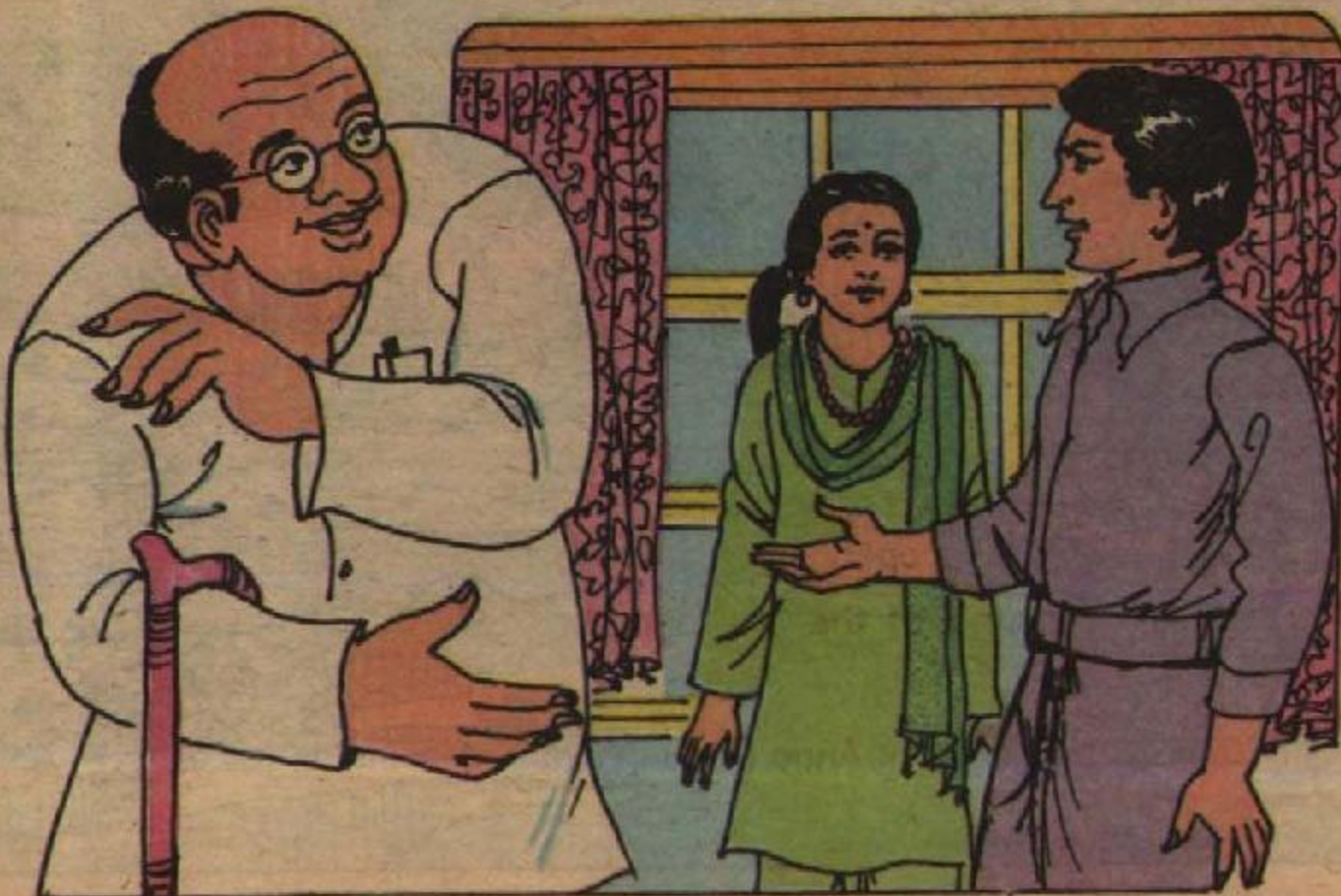
"Haven't you ever met any Englishman? *John Bull* is the nickname for an Englishman or Englishmen collectively. In early 18th century a satire named *The History of John Bull* by Dr. John Arbuthnot used the name to characterise the typical Englishman. It stuck on to the vocabulary," informed Prof. Chowdhury.

"And *Uncle Sam* means a typical American. Am I right?" asked Reena.

"Yes, someone seems to have constructed the name from the initials U.S., in the early 19th century. Probably there was an official called by this name who had to write the initials on boxes meant for the army. But *Uncle Sam* would not mean an individual American, it always means the Americans collectively."

"Russians don't have such a name, or have they?" asked Reena.

"They have. *Ivan Ivanovitch*," said Grandpa Chowdhury.





LET US KNOW

Can you tell in which areas of modern India were known as Anga, Avanti and Sravasti?

—Kumar Joshi, Delhi

Eastern Bihar and the city of Bhagalpur constituted Anga in ancient times. The Malwa region of Madhya Pradesh was Avanti. The capital of this state was Ujjain which retains its name to this day.

Sravasti has been identified with the modern village of Sahet Mahet in Uttar Pradesh.

What is the function of the Prime Minister's Fund?

—Arundhati, Hyderabad

The full name of the establishment is The Prime Minister's National Relief Fund. This was launched in 1947. Run mostly by public contributions, the fund was provided relief to people affected by natural calamities such as earthquakes, floods, cyclones, droughts, famines and fire. Refugees from other countries are also helped by the fund.

Can you tell us what are the full terms for IAAI? CSIR? IFFCO and NAFED?

—Krishna Singh, Jaipur

The International Airport Authority of India, the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, the Indian Farmers Fertiliser Co-operative and the National Agricultural Co-operative Marketing Federation.

What is the meaning of the abbreviation A.D.?

—N. Kay Subbiah, Coorg.

A.D. is an abbreviation of Anno Domini (Latin) meaning 'In the year of our Lord.'

"It's true I recite slokas between deliveries. It's also true that I drink Maltova every day, twice a day so that I have the energy to attack the bowling!"

— Star batsman **K. Srikkanth** on his secret strategy.

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PICKS FROM THE WISE

What a wonderful life I've had! I only wish I'd realised it sooner.

—Colette

A little learning is a dangerous thing, but a lot of ignorance is just as bad.

—Bob Edwards

A perpetual holiday is a good working definition of hell.

—George Bernard Shaw

Will you be there



Puri. The temple of Lord Jagannath. Garland around her neck and vermillion on her forehead, the 9-year-old bride of the Lord pledges her faith to Him amidst all the pomp and ceremony of a true Oriya wedding. No longer an ordinary girl, she is now the earthly consort of Puri Jagannath ...

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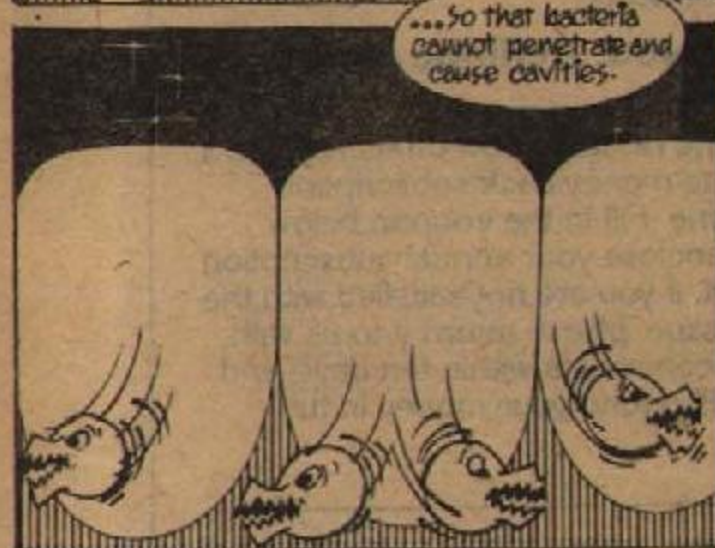
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"The day I discovered my first pimple.

was the day I discovered Clearasil".



I can still remember the day. And how excited I was. My elder sister's wedding was just a week away. So there I was trying on my new clothes before the mirror, when horror of horrors, I noticed something on my cheek ... a pimple. My very first pimple. My first thought was ... oh no, not now!

Just then my didi walked in and saw my face. She said "Arre pagli, everybody gets pimples at this age. I did too. And I used Clearasil. So should you." So I did. And guess what...it worked!

Now I don't need to tell you, I really enjoyed myself at the wedding.

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with games and toys and catching cock
there must be something to be done
All by myself and yet have fun!

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I'll sketch my house, my school and friends
I'll colour, draw, I'll shade and trace
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